

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 PARAMARIBO 0575

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, NS
SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS EVALUATION REPORT: SURINAM

REF: STATE 140421 AND 141243

A. CONDITION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN SURINAM

1. RESPECT FOR THE INTEGRITY OF THE PERSON

THE SURINAM CONSTITUTION PROVIDES THAT EVERYONE HAS THE RIGHT TO PERSONAL FREEDOM AND SECURITY AND THAT NO ONE MAY BE DEPRIVED OF HIS FREEDOM EXCEPT IN THE CASES AND MANNER PROVIDED BY LAW; ANYONE DEPRIVED OF HIS FREEDOM OTHER THAN BY A JUDICIAL ORDER HAS THE RIGHT (BABEAS CORPUS) TO GO BEFORE A JUDGE WHO MUST SET HIM FREE IF THE DEPRIVATION OF FREEDOM IS DEEMED ILLEGAL; ALL SENTENCES SHALL BE DELIVERED IN PUBLIC AND ALL TRIALS HELD IN PUBLIC EXCEPT WHERE OTHERWISE PROVIDED BY LAW; NO ONE'S DWELLING MAY BE ENTERED AGAINST HIS WILL EXCEPT IN PURSUANCE OF AN ORDER DULY ISSUED IN ACCORDANCE WITH LAW. THE EMBASSY IS NOT AWARE OF ANY CASE IN WHICH IT HAS BEEN CHARGED THAT PERSONS WERE SUBJECTED TO TORTURE OR CRUEL, INHUMAN OR DEGRADING PUNISHMENT.

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2. RESPECT FOR CIVIL AND POLITICAL LIBERTIES.

SURINAM'S CONSTITUTION GUARANTEES FREEDOM OF RELIGION, PRESS, ASSEMBLY, ASSOCIATION, INFORMATION AND EDUCATION. SURINAMERS HAVE THE RIGHT TO COME INTO THE COUNTRY AND MAY NOT BE EXPELLED; THEY MAY, WITHIN LIMITATIONS SET BY

LAW. MOVE FREELY AND REMAIN ANYWHERE IN THE COUNTRY. THERE ARE NO RESTRICTIONS ON FIREIGN TRAVEL OR EMIGRATION OTHER THAN LIMITATIONS ON THE TAKING OF FOREIGN EXCHANGE OUT OF THE COUNTRY.

SURINAM IS A PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY WHOSE CONSTITUTION PROVIDES FOR GENERAL ELECTIONS AT LEAST ONCE EVERY FOUR YEARS, WITH EVERY CITIZEN OF VOTING AGE (21) ENTITLED TO FULL PARTICIPATION OTHER THAN THOSE DEPRIVED OF SUFFRAGE BY A COURT SENTENCE, BY IMPRISONMENT OR BY JUDICIAL DECLARATION OF MENTAL INCOMPETENCY. POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS ARE HARD FOUGHT AND ELECTIONS IN RECENT YEARS HAVE RESULTED IN THE LOSS OF POWER BY INCUMBENT PARTIES AND THE COMING INTO POWER OF NEW GROUPS.

3. RECENT TRENDS IN GOVERNMENTAL POLICIES RELATING TO THE FULFILLMENT OF BASIC NEEDS.

SURINAM'S GOVERNMENT IS PUBLICLY COMMITTED TO FULFILLING ALL THE BASIC NEEDS OF EVERY SURINAMER. FREE PUBLIC EDUCATION IS GUARANTEED BY THE CONSTITUTION; COMPULSORY PRIMARY SCHOOL IS PROVIDED FOR ALL AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS FOR ALL OF THOSE WHO DESIRE AND ARE QUALIFIED FOR SSTUDY. THE CONSTITUTION DIRECTS THE CONCERN OF THE GOVERNMENT TO THE SECURITY OF THE LIVELIHOOD OF THE POPULATION, THE PROVISION OF ADEQUATE EMPLOYMENT, THE ENABLING OF EVERYONE

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TO SHARE IN ECONOMIC PROGRESS AND THE ARRANGING OF SOCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR THOSE WHO NEED IT. THE UNIVERSITY OF SURINAM HAS A WELL-ESTABLISHED MEDICAL SCHOOL AND GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE HOSPITALS PROVIDE REASONABLE MEDICAL CARE THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. A NATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE PLAN WAS RECENTLY ENACTED WHICH WILL PROVIDE FOR COMPLETE MEDICAL CARE FOR EVERY SURINAMER. THE GOVERNMENT PROMOTES AGRI-CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT BOTH IN LARGE AGRICULTURAL SCHEMES AND IN PRIVATELY-OWNED FARMS. THERE IS A PUBLIC HOUSING PLAN WHICH, ALTHOUGH IT DOES NOT MOVE AT A FAST PACE, PRODUCES LOW-COST HOUSING. SURINAM HAS A RELATIVELY HIGH PER CAPITA GNP FOR A DEVELOPING COUNTRY (OVER \$1200) AND POVERTY IS A PHENOMENON MORE OF SPECIAL ETHNIC GROUPS (BUSH NEGROES AND AMERICAN INDIANS) LIVING IN ISOLATION IN THE INTERIOR OF THE COUNTRY THAN OF THE POPULATION IN GENERAL. WHILE STRUCTURAL INADEQUACIES OF THE ECONOMY LIMIT THE LEVEL AND EFFICIENCY OF ASSISTANCE TO THE POOR, GOVERNMENT POLICY PROMOTES SUCH ASSISTANCE. AS RECENT SCANDALS HAVE SHOWN, THERE HAS BEEN CORRUPTION IN THE SURINAM GOVERNMENT, BUT LEGAL ACTION HAS BEEN EFFECTIVE AND UNAFFECTED BY PARTISAN POLITICS, AND THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT CORRUPTION HAS BEEN OF SUCH

A NATURE THAT SIGNIFICANT RESOURCES ARE DIVERTED AWAY FROM THE MAJORITY OF THE POPULATION.

4. THE LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD.

THE POSITIVE RECORD OF SURINAM ON HUMAN RIGHTS IS A FUNCTION OF A NUMBER OF FACTORS, INCLUDING THE MEMORY OF THE TIME, HARDLY MORE THAN A CENTURY AGO, WHEN THE MAJORITY OF THE POPULATION WAS IN SLAVERY TO A SMALL EUROPEAN MINORITY; THE COEXISTENCE HERE OF SEVERAL LARGE ETHNIC GROUPS, THE CREOLES, HINDUSTANIS, JAVANESE, CHINESE AND EUROPEANS, NONE OF WHICH CURRENTLY EXCEEDS MUCH MORE THAN A THIRD OF THE POPULATION; THE RUBBING OFF ON
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SURINAMERS OF THE DUTCH LIBERAL POINT OF VIEW OF THE PAST SEVERAL DECADES, ETC. THIS FUNDAMENTAL ATTITUDE IS GENERALLY SHARED AMONG SURINAMERS AND IS PROBABLY AS WIDE-SPREAD AS ONE COULD FIND IN THE UNITED STATES ITSELF. THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PEOPLE THUS PROCEED FROM THE SAME PREMISES, AND THERE IS NO BASIC CONFLICT BETWEEN THEM ON THIS QUESTION. THE AFFIRMATIVE POLICY OF THE GOVERNMENT ON HUMAN RIGHTS, THEREFORE, REFLECTS THE BELIEFS OF THE PEOPLE AND SPEAKS FOR THEM. BEING RATHER TAKEN FOR GRANTED AT THIS TIME WITHIN THIS SOCIETY, THERE IS LITTLE OF WHAT MIGHT BE CALLED ARTICULATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS MEASURES AS PUBLIC POLICY BUT THERE CERTAINLY HAS BEEN WITHIN THE EMBASSY'S EXPERIENCE NO CONDONING OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AS JUSTIFIED BY SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS.

5. GOVERNMENT ATTITUDE TOWARDS OUTSIDE INVESTIGATIONS.

WE ARE NOT AWARE OF ANY CASE WHERE ANYONE FROM OUTSIDE HAS SOUGHT TO INVESTIGATE HUMAN RIGHTS MATTERS IN SURINAM. WE HAVE NO REASON TO BELIEVE THAT SURINAM WOULD RESIST ANY SUCH INVESTIGATION BEING CARRIED OUT ON AN OBJECTIVE BASIS.

B. ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. U.S. OBJECTIVES.

SURINAM DOES NOT NEED ANY HELP FROM THE U.S. OVER THE NEXT THREE, SIX OR TWELVE MONTHS IN IMPROVING THE CONDITIONS OF ITS INTERNAL HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION. IN FACT, THE MERE IDEA THAT THE U.S. WOULD CONSIDER IT ITS TASK TO HELP BRING ABOUT SUCH IMPROVEMENT WOULD BE MET WITH RESENTMENT AND DERISION AND WOULD BOOMERANG.
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2. REACTION IN SURINAM TO THE NEW U.S. HUMAN RIGHTS POLICIES.

IT IS FAIR TO SAY, WE BELIEVE, THAT MOST SURINAMERS WHO WOULD CONSIDER THE QUESTION WOULD CONCLUDE THAT THEY HAVE A BETTER RECORD ON HUMAN RIGHTS THAN DOES THE U.S., ALTHOUGH THEY WOULD BE QUICK TO PRAISE THE EVENTS IN THE U.S. IN RECENT DECADES, ESPECIALLY SINCE THE DESEGREGATION DECISION OF 1954, AS BRINGING THE U.S. WELL ALONG THE ROAD TO AN

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 PARAMARIBO 0575

ENLIGHTENED POLICY. THEY WOULD NOT CONCEDE, HOWEVER, THAT THIS PROGRESS IN THE U.S. GIVES AMERICANS THE RIGHT TO TEACH OR PREACH TO THEM AS FAR AS DOMESTIC U.S. HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRESS IS CONCERNED, THEREFORE, THERE IS ACROSS-THE-BOARD APPROBATION IN SIRINAM.

THE QUESTION OF THE APPLICATION OF OUR HUMAN RIGHTS ATTITUDES IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS, HOWEVER, WOULD MEET WITH A SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT REACTION. WHILE SURINAM LIKES ITS OWN SYSTEM FOR ITSELF, THE PEOPLE HERE (EXCEPT FOR A RELATIVELY SMALL FRINGE OF BLACK NATIONALISTS) ARE NOT CRUSADERS FOR UNIVERSAL CONCEPTS AND THEY TEND TO LOOK AT RECENT U.S. ACTIONS AS POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS. IN THE CASE OF BRAZIL, FOR INSTANCE, THERE WAS LITTLE IDENTIFICATION HERE WITH THE CONSIDERATIONS WHICH CAUSED THE U.S. TO SPEAK OUT AGAINST OUTRAGES, AND

MORE WORRY THAT A DISRUPTION OF U.S.-BRAZIL RELATIONS WOULD HAVE AN ADVERSE EFFECT ON SURINAM'S OWN SECURITY POSITION, WHICH IT SEES AS CLOSELY CONNECTED WITH BRAZIL AS THE NEARBY MAJOR POWER. ONCE WE GET BEYOND THE IMMEDIATE AREA, SUCH AS THE QUESTION OF BRAZIL AND OTHER NEARBY LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES, THE INTEREST OF THE SURINAMER WANES, AND THERE IS LITTLE ATTENTION PAID, FOR INSTANCE, TO PROBLEMS SUCH AS EMIGRATION OF DISSIDENTS AND JEWS FROM THE SOVIET UNION.

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3. IMPLICATIONS FOR CHANGES IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS CONDITIONS.

THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN SURINAM IS A PRODUCT OF DOMESTIC SURINAMESE FACTORS AND WILL NOT BE INFLUENCED SIGNIFICANTLY BY ACTIONS TAKEN BY OTHER COUNTRIES EITHER DOMESTICALLY OR IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS. WHAT COULD HAVE AN ADVERSE EFFECT ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN SURINAM WOULD BE A SERIOUS ECONOMIC REVERSE OR A POLITICAL CONFRONTATION BETWEEN THE MAJOR ETHNIC GROUPS, THE CREOLES AND THE HINDUSTANIS. EITHER OF THESE SITUATIONS COULD, OVER A PERIOD OF TIME, LEAD THE GOVERNMENT (IN THE HANDS OF ONE GROUP OR THE OTHER) TO FEEL THAT THE APPLICATION OF DRACONIAN MEASURES, INCLUDING, NO DOUBT, VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS, WAS NEEDED TO INSURE THE SURVIVAL OF THE STATE (READ SURVIVAL OF ITS OWN LEADERSHIP POSITION). IT IS THIS EVENTUALITY THAT THE U.S. MUST BE CONCERNED WITH, AND WORK TO AVOID.

4. A. IN THE CONTEXT DESCRIBED ABOVE, THE QUESTION OF THE IMPACT OF HUMAN RIGHTS ACTION ON OTHER U.S. INTERESTS DOES NOT ARISE IN SURINAM.

B. WHILE SURINAM WILL PROBABLY CONTINUE TO KEEP A RELATIVELY LOW PROFILE AND WILL TEMPER ITS ADVOCACY OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN INTERNATIONAL FORUMS WITH A VIEW TOWARDS ITS COMMERCIAL AND SECURITY INTERESTS, IN GENERAL THE U. S. MAY EXPECT SUPPORT FROM SURINAM FOR EFFORTS TO PROMOTE HUMAN RIGHTS THROUGH GOVERNMENTAL AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS.

5. RECOMMENATIONS

IT WILL BE SEEN FROM THE ABOVE THAT SURINAM IS ATYPICAL AND IF ALL THE COUNTRIES WE HAD TO DEAL WITH WERE LIKE THIS

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ONE WE WOULD NEVER HAVE EVEN HAD THE REQUEST TO DO THESE EVALUATIONS. WHATEVER THE FACTORS WHICH PRODUCED IT, WE ARE FORTUNATE TO HAVE A COUNTRY LIKE SURINAM IN OUR AREA TO PROVIDE A KINDRED SPIRIT FOR US. TOO BAD THAT IT IS SO SMALL, POWERLESS AND WITHOUT MUCH INFLUENCE. BUT, IN OUR EFFORTS TO PUT OUT FIRES ELSEWHERE AND BRING THE RECALCITRANT INTO LINE, WE MUST NOT NEGLECT PLACES LIKE SURINAM THAT COULD ALSO GO SOUR. MUCH OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE WORLD TODAY IS THE RESULT NOT OF A THEORETICAL DENIAL OF THE PHILOSOPHICAL PRINCIPAL BUT OF ECONOMIC, SECURITY AND SOCIAL SITUATIONS IN WHICH PEOPLE JUDGE, HOWEVER WRONGLY AND HOWEVER MUCH THEIR SOCIETIES WILL SUFFER FOR IT LATER, THAT THE GREATER GOOD OF THE GREATER NUMBER REQUIRES THE VIOLATION OF THE RIGHTS OF SOME. REGARDING SURINAM, THERE ARE TWO BASIC WAYS IN WHICH WE SHOULD PROMOTE OUR INTERESTS IN THE AREA OF HUMAN RIGHTS AS WELL AS OUR OVERALL INTERESTS, WHICH FORTUNATELY ARE COMPLEMENTARY AND NOT IN CONFLICT AT THIS TIME:

A. WE MUST TAKE AN ENLIGHTENED INTEREST IN THE AFFAIRS OF THIS COUNTRY AND ASSIST IT TO MAKE SOME SENSE OUT OF ITS NEWLY-ACQUIRED INDEPENDENCE AND TO PUT ITS HOUSE IN SUCH ORDER THAT IT WILL CONTINUE TO PROSPER AND OFFER A STABLE AND JUST SOCIETY EVEN AFTER THE PRESENT TEN-TO-FIFTEEN-YEAR GENEROUS NETHERLANDS AID PROGRAM RUNS OUT. THIS DOES NOT MEAN MONEY: THE DUTCH HAVE GIVEN MORE THAN ENOUGH OF THAT AND IT WILL NOT DO THE TRICK IN ITSELF. IT MEANS BEING WILLING TO LOOK AFTER THE WHEEL WHICH DOES NOT SQUEAK, OF CONSULTING SURINAM'S INTERESTS IN DECISIONS AFFECTING ITS TRADE AND ECONOMIC POSITION, OF HELPING TO REORIENT SURINAM TOWARDS THE UNITED STATES IN TERMS OF EDUCATION, INFORMATION, TECHNOLOGY AND OTHER FACTORS OF BASIC ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE. IF WE HELP SURINAM TO REMAIN A PROSPEROUS SOCIETY WITH A MEANINGFUL LIFE FOR ITS CITIZENS, IT WILL CONTINUE TO TAKE CARE OF ITS OWN HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEMS.

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B. WE MUST DEMONSTRATE TO SURINAM THAT WE ARE THE KIND OF SOCIETY THAT DESERVES SUPPORT AND PERHAPS EMULATION, THAT THE SECOND TWO HUNDRED YEARS OF THE AMERICAN IDEA ARE GOING TO BE JUST AS FRUITFUL FOR THE WORLD AS WERE THE FIRST TWO HUNDRED, AND THAT DEMOCRATIC LIBERTY IS THE WAVE OF THE FUTURE, NOT TOTALITARIANISM OF THE LEFT OR OF THE RIGHT. TO DO THIS WE HAVE TO PUT PRIMARY EMPHASIS ON OUR DOMESTIC POLICY. WE MUST ATTAIN RACIAL JUSTICE IN THE U.S., AND ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL JUSTICE AS WELL. IF WE DO THAT, THEN THE MESSAGE WILL GET ACROSS EVEN IF WE NEVER SAY ANYTHING; BUT IF WE DO NOT DO SO, THEN OUR FOREIGN POLICIES IN THE

HUMAN RIGHTS FIELD WILL NOT LEAD TO ANYTHING BUT DISILLUSION-
MENT AND QUITE POSSIBLY A WORSENING, RATHER THAN A BETTERING,
OF THE SITUATION OF THOSE WE ARE TRYING TO HELP. AND, AS
A BEGINNING, WE NEED TO REALIZE THAT WE STILL HAVE A LONG, LONG
WAY TO GO.
ZURHELLEN

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